

# HEARING IN COLOR PRESENTS

WHERE LOVE IS DISTANT, LOYALTY IS QUESTIONED

# UNDYING LOVE

A CHAMBER OPERA BY STEVE WALLACE



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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12TH, 2021 | 7PM

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COLLABORATION WITH



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# CONTENT WARNING: SUICIDE, VIOLENCE, AND A LOUD GUNSHOT SOUND EFFECT IN SCENE FOUR

## SETTING: Queens, NY - Early 1960s

**SCENE ONE (Sidewalk in front of Taylor & Angela's home):** Taylor has just returned home from an extended band tour with enough money to finally propose to his girlfriend, Angela. Reading from a crumpled note where he's written down his thoughts, he finds the door to his house unlocked and another man in his bedroom with Angela. Furious and confused, he grabs a gun and runs out.

**SCENE TWO (Street corner in Queens, NY):** Taylor meets his best friend, Jesse, by a payphone on the street. Taylor recounts what he saw, and shows Jesse the gun in his pocket. Jesse urges him to go back to the house and make the man pay. Taylor hesitates, not wanting to go back to his old ways, but with his household and reputation at risk, is convinced to make it clear to everyone that Angela is off-limits.

**SCENE THREE (Living room of Taylor & Angela's house):** Angela is alone in the house she and Taylor share. She is thinking about how lonely the last year has been without Taylor and how much she regrets giving in to her night with Carlos, Taylor's rival. She sings to her only confidant in their home...the walls. Carlos shows up again in this time of despair and once more, Angela falls for his sweet words in Taylor's absence.

**SCENE FOUR (Taylor & Angela's house):** Angela and Carlos are in the throes of passion when Taylor and Jesse arrive. Waiting for the right moment, Taylor recognizes Carlos and in fury, steps out. Aiming the gun at Carlos, he shoots him in the ribs. Angela in panic tries to console Taylor but in his disgust he accidentally fires the gun, shooting Angela. As she lays dying, sirens are heard. Jesse, not wanting to go back to jail, runs out and is killed in a flurry of bullets. Taylor, devastated by Angela's death, takes his own life.

**RUN TIME: 45 MINS**

## PLEASE NOTE

**MASKS MUST BE WORN AT ALL TIMES  
WHILE INSIDE THE KEHREIN CENTER**

# ARTISTS

## CREATIVE TEAM

**COMPOSER, LIBRETTIST, CONDUCTOR**

Steve Wallace

**DIRECTOR**

LaRob K. Rafael

**PRODUCTION MANAGER**

Moriah "Mojo" Johnson

**PRODUCTION ASSISTANT**

Keegan Morris

**ORCHESTRA**

D-Composed

## CAST

**TAYLOR**

Brian Major

**ANGELA**

Whitney Morrison

**JESSE**

Tyrese Byrd

**CARLOS**

Curtis Bannister

## HEARING IN COLOR

**ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

LaRob K. Rafael

**MANAGING DIRECTOR**

Angela Hamilton

**MARKETING DIRECTOR**

Maureen Smith

**FINANCE & DEVELOPMENT**

Joseph Tang

**DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION**

Nikolaj Sorensen

**TECHNICAL DIRECTOR**

Daniel Johanson

**COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER**

Margaret Kellas



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# BRIAN MAJOR



Charismatic baritone Brian Major continues to be praised by critics for his velvety voice and “commanding stage presence.” During the 2020-2021 season, Mr. Major was engaged to make his Chautauqua Orchestra debut singing Paul Moravec and Mark Campbell’s *Sanctuary Road* as well as selections from *Porgy & Bess*, his Opera on the James debut as Scarpia in *Tosca*, and a debut with Maryland Lyric Opera as Ford in *Falstaff* (COVID19). In the spring of 2021, Mr. Major returned to Opera Grand Rapids as Gary in Douglas Pew’s *Penny* and will join Lyric Fest for a filmed recital of Kurt Weill songs, the Princeton Festival for an Opera Gala, and Opera Delaware for a concert of Shakespeare selections. During the 2021-2022 season, Mr. Major will return to the Columbus Symphony to sing Schaunard in *La bohème* and as the bass soloist in Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony* as well as returning to Opera Grand Rapids to sing Ping in *Turandot*.

# WHITNEY MORRISON



Rising star Whitney Morrison has earned praise for her “big, gleaming soprano” (Chicago Classical Review) and “vocally sumptuous” performances (Chicago Tribune). A Chicago native and recent alum of Lyric Opera of Chicago’s Ryan Opera Center, Morrison champions an African American aesthetic in classical music, embracing a style of performance that blends classical singing technique with elements of the gospel singing tradition. Morrison’s future engagements include 7 Deaths of Maria Callas with Marina Abramović at the Greek National Opera Athens. Recent credits include: Leonie Baker in the world premiere of Freedom Ride at Chicago Opera Theater, and Sister Rose in Dead Man Walking at the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

# TYRESE BYRD



**Tyrese Byrd, tenor, is a native of Greenville, SC and a graduate of the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities. He is currently pursuing a Masters of Music degree at the University of Michigan while studying with Dr. Louise Toppin. He completed his undergraduate studies at Furman University, where he studied with Dr. Grant Knox. Recent roles include Miles in Proving Up by Missy Mazzoli, Herr Vogelsang in Der Schauspieldirektor, Le Prince Charmant in Cendrillon, Arpad in She Loves Me, and the title role in Mozart's Bastien und Bastienne. His concert repertoire includes Mozart's Requiem, Coronation Mass in C and Handel's Messiah, and Mendelssohn's Elijah.**

# CURTIS BANNISTER



The 2020/21 schedule began with Curtis Bannister's debut in Award-winning Apple TV+ series, **DICKINSON**, as Marquis for the show's second season, returned to Chicago Opera Theatre as the Hotel Manager in new opera "**THE TRANSFORMATION OF JANE DOE**", and in a joint collaboration with Heartbeat Opera NYC, the The Broad Stage in Los Angeles and the Mondavi Center, Curtis is featured in excerpts from Beethoven's **Fidelio (Florestan)** and songs by H.T. Burleigh in the visual album, **BREATHING FREE**, which heightens the Black African American experience; this performance is nominated for a 2021 Drama League Award. Later in the season, Curtis returns to Chicago Opera Theatre as Baglioni in **LA HIJA DE RAPPACCINI**, performs with theater and film star, Heather Headley, for **GOODMAN THEATER**'s 2021 Gala and makes his debut at the **TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL** in the world premiere of the feature film "**The Conductor**", highlighting the revolutionary conductor, Marin Alsop.



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# FORBIDDEN SPACES

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# KORI COLEMAN FOUNDER & ED OF D-COMPOSED

**When first approached about being a part of Undying Love, the answer was an enthusiastic YES. As Black artists & musicians, when you have an opportunity to celebrate your culture and your stories, you have no choice but to say yes to that call.**

**Undying Love allows us to step into our purpose and aligns with our mission to celebrate Black culture and creativity through the music of Black composers. By paying homage to a story rooted in hip-hop, we're able to show the breadth and depth of Black creativity while honoring the richness of our culture.**

**What brings this story to life is the incomparable talent of many Black artists. It's not lost on us the significance of having an opera written by a Black composer, performed by an all-Black ensemble. While this is a rare feat in today's classical music landscape, we hope this opens the door for other artists who aspire to create their own spaces on their terms. We're forever grateful for the talent and vision of Steve Wallace and LaRob Rafael. This work has started a new chapter of this Black renaissance in Chicago.**

**A special thank you to Yelley Taylor, Caitlin Edwards, Tahirah Whittington, Rachel Taylor, Thaddeus Tukes, and Jeremiah Hunt for sharing their gifts and brilliance. They have shown a commitment to not only their craft, but I'm grateful they are on this journey with us so we can continue to amplify the works of Black composers in new and re-imagined ways.**

**Kori Coleman**



# STEVE WALLACE COMPOSER, LIBRETTIST, CONDUCTOR

**Undying Love** is a first of its kind. Never before has there been an opera based on or influenced by a song from Hip Hop Culture. With this work, it continues the conversation of the validity of Black culture in the “so-called” classical sphere of art that has been partitioned keeping BIPOC creatives generally at arm’s length. We are here, and we have been here. And now we bring stories from our “pool of Black Genius” as Donny Hathaway once said. Not for the sake of acceptance, but for the sake of art; telling a story using drama, words, and music which is the essence of those early experiments by the Florentine Camerata in the 16th century when the medium of opera was first born.

Many thanks to everyone who made this production of **Undying Love** possible. To LaRob, all the staff and the volunteers at Hearing in Color for their commitment and dedication to my vision for this project and seeing even beyond the words and music on the page. To my family; my lovely wife Robye and sweet daughter Ava for believing in me and supporting my work, my Mom and Dad for taking me to Merit every weekend and establishing my core values. To Geoff and Linda Hirt, Duffie Adelson, and all my other friends and family who continue to support my work. Let’s continue to grow and change this world with more groundbreaking art.

Steve Wallace



# LAROB K. RAFAEL | ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Hearing in Color is so proud to present *Undying Love* to the world. Steve Wallace, (composer/librettist), has begun something we have not yet seen in opera - drawing from the stories in Hip Hop songs and using the medium of opera to convey a similar drama. Often separately, we appreciate these artistic vehicles, now we can draw from the well-spring of Black Culture to continue to tell stories that we are familiar with and excited to see told on the grand stage. More importantly, Steve has created an opportunity for us to see Black characters experience dynamic humanness that is not situated in their collective oppression or ability to rise above it. *Undying Love* is a snapshot into these characters' lives and their inability to navigate the incredibly potent and realistic feelings of love, infidelity, hypermasculinity, anger, and grief. Human feelings, however extreme.

The importance of this work is beyond the qualifications of typical classical institutions. This is a door now open, a ceiling now broken. It is my hope that Hearing in Color builds upon this moment to continue to show how powerful it is to amplify our own stories, unqualified by - as producer, bassoonist, and podcast host, Garrett McQueen eloquently states - the "Classical Industrial Complex."

My sincerest thank you's to: My amazing Hearing in Color team - This performance is impossible without your commitment to our work. Sam & Becca Hartman Pickerill, North Shore Baptist Church, Caitleen Kahn, Lynx Project, WFMT Chicago, Moriah 'Mojo' Johnson, Sharon Morgan, Ed Siderewicz, the Kehrein Center for the Arts, D-Composed, Brian Major, Tyrese Byrd, Whitney Morrison, Curtis Bannister, Jennie Oh Brown, Dan Nichols and Aphorism Studios, Eric Arunas and Forest Strong Lafave.

And of course, all of you who support Hearing in Color. Enjoy the performance!

LaRob K. Rafael.



# Hearing in Color Young Composer Residency



Gwen Maramba



Diversifying the roster of choral composers performed in concert halls is of the utmost importance in our industry, and Hearing in Color wants to help lead the charge by supporting and uplifting emerging composers from varying communities to try their hand at choral composition with one of Chicago's leading professional ensembles. That is why we are so excited by this collaboration with La Caccina, and by the announcement of our first composer-in-residence, Gwen Maramba!

**Do you know a young BIPOC composer? Have them send an inquiry to [info@hearingincolor.org](mailto:info@hearingincolor.org)  
OR Click below to learn more!**

Tap here!

# SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you to all our donors who believe in the work we do by helping us present the stories and voices that need to be heard. Thank you for growing with us.

*"The more we allow for people of a variety of different backgrounds to authentically tell their own stories, it allows an opportunity for you to receive an authentic experience of somebody's story being told."*

Steve Wallace

If you would like to join in supporting our future work of sharing the music, stories, and composers who have historically been excluded from musical spaces, consider making a donation at [www.hearingincolor.org/donate](http://www.hearingincolor.org/donate).

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Help us continue bringing world-premiere performances like **Undying Love** and initiatives like our **Young Composer Residency** to life!

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